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Here then, in the third stage of experience, is the first possibility of an error in the affirmations of Consciousness, and that error comes in

(b) *The only form in which it is possible for error to enter the human mind, namely, under cover of an inferred identity.*

The proposition is that the visual image is caused by an external object whose cause is also potentially the cause of a certain image of extension. The error comes of the failure to verify each step of the induction. But as the proposition is the simplest conceivable, being composed of but two particulars, it may always be resolved into its parts, and the induction thereupon either verified or corrected — not only with perfect rigor logically, but with the clearness and distinctness of the consciousness of our own existence. For the particulars of the proposition are images of the second category, ideas in which severally error is impossible because severally they affirm nothing but existence. So long as the image affirms nothing but itself, an act of consciousness, error is impossible: *when, however, the image seems to affirm the potential cause of another than itself*, then it does not affirm with the same confidence as it affirms itself: for the reason that it is then no longer an individual affirmation, but is one of the parts of a proposition in the third category, which proposition it is that affirms the oar dipped into water to be broken, the distant tower to be round.

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## ON THE DIALECTIC METHOD.

(E. v. HARTMANN's Reply, in the *Philosophische Monatshefte*, to the Criticism of his Essay "On the Dialectic Method," by Prof. MICHELET.)

Translated from the German by LOUIS SOLDAN.

If the anatomical knife pierces the vital nerve of any being, we must not be astonished at the appearance of spasmodic convulsions; their non-appearance, on the contrary, would be an indication of a failure to hit the right point. In this way it can be but flattering for my essay that it called forth a violent effusion of wrath from Professor Michelet as the

representative of Hegelianism, and the above consideration renders more excusable the irritated and personal tone of his criticism, which in some places steps beyond the limits of what is becoming. If I have not hesitated "to print the whole trash," though Mr. Michelet, as he did not omit publicly to state, had previously had the kindness, gratefully acknowledged by me, to communicate to me in writing all his objections to my whole manuscript *ad marginem*; if these objections could not move me to even any changes worth naming, it is plain enough that I felt very little hurt by his thunderbolts, and very little touched by the anticipation of "standing before the eyes of the public at large the reproof which I first sent him in a confidential letter."

Not what Mr. Michelet wrote causes me to break my silence, but what he did not write. I will explain what I mean.

All that Mr. Michelet says can essentially be classified under two headings. Under the first, Hegel's assertions and turns, which in the respective chapters I had critically analyzed and annihilated, are simply repeated as if they were still "alive and kicking" and my critique did not exist. This mode of acting may be very convenient, and perhaps sufficient to produce a bad opinion of my essay with those who do not know it; but the serving up again of the sufficiently known dialectic phrases will not pass for a refutation. Under the second heading, wherever I infer the most immediate consequences from Hegel, the objection is raised that I did not understand Hegel, inasmuch as he never said such a thing; as if I did not know this just as well. But he who asserts, asserts also the consequences, and only the proof of having inferred incorrect consequences can refute them. But such proof Mr. Michelet brings nowhere, reproaching me, on the contrary, with not knowing that Hegel said just the opposite of those inferred consequences. It is all the worse for me that I show, a few lines below, that I know the passage in which the opposite is said, for now I am made responsible for the contradiction which I have exposed in Hegel's thoughts, as though for one which I have committed myself.

I shall gladly pass over in silence the compiling and quoting of fragments torn out from their connection which was intended to exhibit to the reader what absurdities I had writ-

ten. I shall not speak about Mr. Michelet's peculiar habit of denying all erudition in the History of Philosophy to all but those who approve of the intentional misrepresentations in Hegel's History of Philosophy; for science tabled this matter long ago. All this could not have brought me to a word of reply, for whosoever feels interested in the subject may read my little pamphlet, and will there find the best refutation.

But Mr. Michelet, though discussing most of my chapters, even giving their titles, has omitted altogether to mention two chapters which happen to be the most important ones; he has ignored them in a critique extending over sixteen pages, in which he allowed room even to the most insignificant thrusts and reflections. To explain the meaning of this interesting fact, I must give a short outline of the thread of my critique.

1. I point out in Hegel's Dialectics the hitherto seldom noticed dualism between an esoteric side which must decline every justification outside of itself, standing purely on reason, and an exoteric side which finds the former stand-point practically untenable, and makes the inconsistent attempt of justifying itself before the understanding. (Against this Mr. Michelet could show nothing but the repetition of some of the most common dialectic phrases.)

2. I show that the exoteric side essentially seeks its justification in the proof that contradiction is contained in all being and in all thinking, with the intention of inciting the understanding by this knowledge to throw itself into the arms of reason. (That this means the setting aside of the principle of contradiction I proved strictly, but Mr. Michelet responded by the strange imputation that I intended to deny the existence of contradiction in thoughts and actions of men in general; while he quotes my words on the next page, “that contradiction is only found where it was made previously”; in which expression I say distinctly enough that “contradiction is found,” but only as the product (and therefore at the same time as the indication) of error; as error is possible only in conscious, discursive thought, and not in the unconscious, intuitive thought, which Hegel terms objective thought. What kinds of antitheses form a contradiction in

their union, and under what conditions they do so, I have investigated at length in my work above quoted.)

3. I enter upon the esoteric side of the dialectics as it follows in its purity from Hegel's principle, and show that the absolute fluidity of the idea, the cancelling of the principle of Identity, and with it the impossibility of all thinking, results from the self-movement of the idea (the property of A to be at the same time B).

4. I prove that it is impossible ever to arrive at a new idea, and consequently at a dialectic progress, by the union of contraries. This chapter, as is explicitly stated there, is the specific critique of all dialectics that attempts to evade nominally the setting aside of the principle of contradiction, and tries to operate merely with the unity of contraries instead of operating like Hegel with the Identity of contraditories. As Mr. Michelet calls this view of Kuno Fischer quite correct (p. 329), the refutation of this chapter ought to have been a great deal more important to him than the refutation of all the rest of my book; next to this, his criticism ought to have been directed against the preceding chapter, which grinds to dust the dialectics in its esoteric side, its innermost kernel. And of all the sections of my book these are the very ones about which Mr. Michelet has not a single syllable; while another adherent of the dialectic method, who of course rejects like Mr. Michelet every word of my book, still designated to me these two chapters as the dazzling points of my essay.

Any supposition that Mr. Michelet overlooked or did not understand the significance of these chapters is precluded by the circumstance that I had written to him about their importance, regretting the absence of his marginal notes in regard to the most important points of my line of argument. As Mr. Michelet has shown now how easy a thing it is for him to make a reply, it cannot be supposed that he was at all at a loss to "say something" also against these chapters; the only explanation that remains for his action is that he intended to kill by silence the principal part of my writings in order to criticise more explicitly minor points, and thereby to make a show of thorough critique, while the readers remained ignorant of the principal part of the contents.